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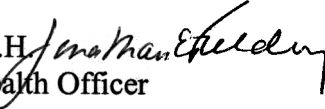
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September 17, 2002

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Thomas L. Garthwaite, M.D. 
Director and Chief Medical Officer

Jonathan E. Fielding, M.D., M.P.H. 
Director of Public Health and Health Officer

**SUBJECT: CDC YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY OF LOS ANGELES UNIFIED
SCHOOL DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

The Tobacco Control & Prevention Program (TCP) recently completed an assessment of recent trends in tobacco use among Los Angeles Unified School District high school students from the 1997 and 2001 CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). The findings are very encouraging and we wanted to share them with your Board.

The survey found a 45% reduction in current cigarette smoking (one or more cigarettes in the last 30 days), from 26.5% in 1997 to 14.5% in 2001. In addition, there was a 58% decline in frequent smoking (20 or more cigarettes in the last 30 days), between 1997 and 2001. This new data puts Los Angeles well below the national 2010 youth smoking rate goal of 16%, almost a decade ahead of schedule. The survey also found that compared to national YRBS data, Los Angeles public high school students experienced a steeper decline in cigarette use between 1997 and 2001, and that in 2001, levels of cigarette use were substantially lower in Los Angeles County public schools than in the nation as a whole.

Additional data from the YRBS showed

Fewer students were able to buy cigarettes without being asked to show proof of age (54.6% in 1997 versus 50.5% in 2001);

Fewer students had smoked cigarettes on school property in the past 30 days (8.9% in 1997 versus 3.9% in 2001); and

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The percentage of students who smoked a whole cigarette for the first time before age 13 had decreased (22% in 1997 versus 18.2% in 2001)

This reduction in teen tobacco use is especially significant in light of a new study on the addictiveness of tobacco for youth. According to the study conducted by the University of Massachusetts, among high school girls who were occasional smokers, it took only three weeks for them to become addicted to nicotine. Boys who smoked occasionally became addicted by six months. Because of the short window between initial experimentation with cigarettes and becoming addicted, preventing or delaying high school students' first cigarette can help reduce the number of addicted teen smokers, girls in particular.

Overall, the dramatic reductions in tobacco use among youth demonstrate the utility of TCP's comprehensive approach that includes: community-based programs to reduce tobacco use, enforcement of tobacco control policies, counter marketing to counter pro-tobacco influences, and promoting smoking cessation.

Thank you for supporting this effective public health program. Please do not hesitate to contact either of us if you need additional information.

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Attachment

c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors



SUMMARY OF CDC YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY CIGARETTE USE AMONG LA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS 1997 & 2001

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September 2002

CIGARETTE USE AMONG LOS ANGELES HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, 1997 & 2001

ITEM	PERCENT	PERCENT	CHANGE BETWEEN
	1997	2001	1997 & 2001
1. Percentage of students who ever tried cigarette smoking, even one or two puffs.	69.8%	60.0%	
2. Percentage of students who smoked cigarettes on one or more of the last 30 days.	26.5%	14.5%	-12.0%
3. Percentage of students who smoked cigarettes on twenty or more of the last 30 days.	6.4%	2.7%	
4. Percentage of students who were current smokers and have tried to quit smoking.	52.5%	NA	
5. Percentage of students who were current smokers and have tried to quit smoking during the past 12 months.	N/A	58.2%	
6. Percentage of students who were not asked to show proof of age when they bought cigarettes in a store during the past 30 days.	54.6%	50.5%	-4.1%
7. Percentage of students who smoked a whole cigarette for the first time before age 13.	22.0%	18.2%	
8. Percentage of students who smoked cigarettes on school property on one or more of the past 30 days.	8.9%	3.9%	-5.0%

Table 1: Percentage of Students Who Have Tried Cigarette Smoking

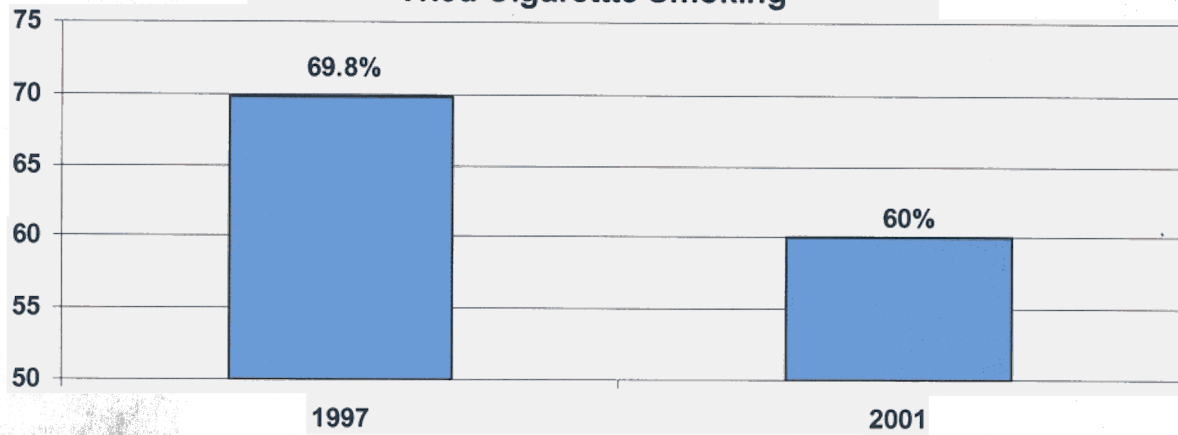


Table 2: Percentage of Students Who Are Current Cigarette Smokers

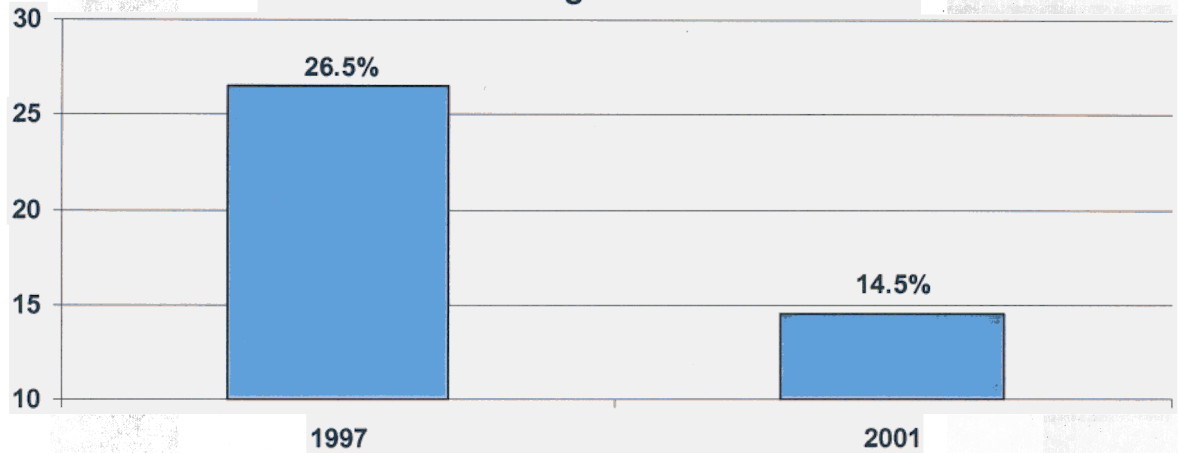


Table 3: Percentage of Students Who Are Frequent Cigarette Smokers

